

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE WAYNE T. GILCHREST, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS AT THE JOINT OVERSIGHT HEARING ON CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE: MAY 16, 2002.

I AM PLEASED TO JOIN WITH MY DISTINGUISHED COLLEAGUE, SCOTT MCINNIS

IN SCHEDULING THIS TIMELY OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE EMERGING

PROBLEM OF CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE AS IT AFFECTS POPULATIONS OF

DEER AND ELK.

WHILE CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE OR CWD HAS THUS FAR BEEN LIMITED TO

SEVEN WESTERN STATES AND WISCONSIN, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT STEPS BE

TAKEN TO STOP THIS FATAL AND CONTAGIOUS DISEASE. THIS DISEASE

HAS IMPACTED BOTH CAPTIVE AND WILD HERDS OF DEER AND ELK. IT

SLOWLY PROGRESSES CAUSING ITS VICTIMS TO SUFFER A SLOW

LINGERING DEATH. THIS DISEASE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DEVASTATE

DEER AND ELK HERDS ACROSS THE NATION. IN FACT, JUST TWO WEEKS

AGO, THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES ANNOUNCED

THAT 15,000 WHITE-TAILED DEER WOULD BE KILLED TO STOP THE SPREAD

OF THIS DISEASE.

SADLY, THERE IS MUCH WE DO NOT KNOW ABOUT CWD. FOR INSTANCE,

WHAT ARE THE MODES OF TRANSMISSION? WHAT IS RESPONSIBLE

FOR THE CONVERSION OF NORMAL PROTEINS TO PRIONS? ARE PRIONS

EVEN THE INFECTIVE AGENT? AND, CAN CWD INFECT HUMANS THAT
CONSUME MEAT FROM INFECTED ANIMALS?

I AM ANXIOUS TO WORK WITH MY COLLEAGUES TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY
FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO STOP THE SPREAD OF CHRONIC
WASTING DISEASE. THIS ROLE COULD INCLUDE: MONEY FOR TESTING,
MONITORING, RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND PROACTIVE CONTROL
MEASURES. HOWEVER, WE CAN NOT SIT IDLY BY AND ALLOW CWD TO
INFECT DEER AND ELK POPULATIONS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM OUR DISTINGUISHED WITNESSES AND

I HOPE THEY CAN ENLIGHTEN US AS TO THE NEXT NECESSARY STEPS IN

THE ESCALATING BATTLE AGAINST THIS POORLY UNDERSTOOD AND

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

